

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph at page 6 lines 3-15 with the following amended paragraph:

One embodiment of the present invention is directed to a process for the production of at least one cyclic ester of a hydroxy organic acid from a feed stream comprising at least one of a hydroxy organic acid (e.g., glycolic acid, L-lactic acid, D-lactic acid, DL-lactic acid, 4-hydroxybutyric acid, 3-hydroxypropionic acid), an ammonium salt of a hydroxy organic acid, an ester of a hydroxy organic acid, or an amide of a hydroxy organic acid. The process can be performed in either batch or continuous mode. The hydroxy organic acid of the amide, ester, ammonium salt or free acid that is a component of the feed stream can be an alpha, beta, delta, gamma, or epsilon hydroxy organic acid and preferably has from 2 to 6 carbon atoms. The feed stream can be a fermentation broth or can be derived from other sources. When the feed stream comprises an ammonium salt, ~~an~~ a hydroxy organic acid amide, or an ester of a hydroxy organic acid a product of a thermal decomposition of the salt or the ester can be reacted to produce the cyclic ester of the hydroxy organic acid.